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A STORY IN PICTURES : LANDSCAPE AND LIFE IN HUE, CENTRAL VIETNAM

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A STORY IN PICTURES

LANDSCAPE AND LIFE IN HUE, CENTRAL VIETNAM

KEI MIZUNO

When one travels frequently to a particular country, it is easy to become inured to sights and sounds that once made an impression. This has not happened to me with regard to central Vietnam, even though I have made 15 visits in two years as a member of a joint project between Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry and Kyoto University (see also Iizuka, Le and Tanaka in this volume). Every footstep I take in this region still sends a thrill through my heart and body. Every photograph I take captures only a fraction of the brilliance and inspiration I find in the region's cities, landscape and, above all, its people.

Many of the photographs in this collection were taken during a visit in April 2006, when a professional video crew, some project members and I flew over the villages and cities of Thua Thien Hue province by helicopter. It was the very first attempt to document this area from the air for academic purposes and has yielded valuable information on the geography and the interactions between the people and natural environment that define each of the project sites and the people who live in them.

CITY - HUE



The citadel, the ancient capital of the Nguyen dynasty, has retained its regal proportions since the early 19th century.



Walls, water and verdant greenery create a decorative frame for a city that still carries the deep scars of war, three decades after the conflict ended.

MOUNTAIN - HONG HA



The war brought about a dramatic change in the lifestyle of the ethnic minorities who lived near the upper Bo river. They moved away from practising shifting cultivation in the deep forest to form paddy-based settlements in a flood-prone valley.



Behind the peace and comfort of this gentle rural landscape, the remains of the past — despoiled forest, bomb craters and exploded shells — remind us of what the villagers experienced in the past.



The blessings of Mother Forest: home to the spirit of the gods and people's wisdom.

PLAIN - HUONG VAN



Situated in the plain where the Bo flows down from the mountains, Huong Van is vulnerable to frequent flooding.



Living with floods: paddling the village road again after the fifth flood in 2007.



A flooded schoolyard and paddy field become a fishing pond for the local children.



This 78-year-old lady lost her home during the 1999 flood and now stays alone in a steel-framed house built by the Red Cross, living on the income she receives from her small cassava garden. Her life story has turned from tragedy to hope: the warmth of the community that supports her is one of the reasons for her big smile.

LAGOON - HUONG PHONG AND THUAN AN



Asia's largest lagoon can be found where the Bo meets the South China Sea (flowing through just two outlets in 70 km of coastline). This is a rich, brackish environment ideal for diverse aquaculture practices.



Zoned water: various technologies for aquatic production take advantage of the lagoon's unique environment.



Living with, by, on, and for the water.

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Kei Mizuno is an assistant professor at the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, specialising in regional planning and land-use studies in Asian and African rural areas. His current interest is in community-based development, with a focus on indigenous farming systems. He is also skilled in the macroscopic assessment of land resources, using remote sensing and geographic information systems. He took a principal role in the planning and implementation of the aerial video and photoshoot over Thua Thien Hue province featured in this photographic essay.